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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 001618

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SUBJECT: E.TIMOR'S PRESIDENT MAKES INDONESIA DESTINATION OF
FIRST STATE VISIT

REF: JAKARTA 1475

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Classified By: Political Officer Catherine E. Sweet,
Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. President Jose Ramos-Horta's June 5 visit to Indonesia was "very, very positive," according to Timorese DCM Roberto Soares. He said that the two presidents discussed bilateral economic and political issues (including border demarcation), and agreed to extend the Commission on Truth and Friendship's (CTF) mandate for an additional six months. Soares was rather upbeat about the CTF's hearings thus far, praising both presidents' commitment to the CTF process and saying that the participation of high-level Indonesian officials' indicated Indonesia's seriousness. Soares acknowledged the skepticism of some Timorese about the CTF, but said that the government still believes it is the best way for now. Finally, Soares expressed strong support for continuation of U.S.-Indonesian military-to-military relations, saying that his government would oppose termination of U.S. assistance to Indonesia. "The more the U.S. has relations with Indonesia," Soares stressed, "the more it benefits Timor Leste." End Summary.

Ramos-Horta in Indonesia: "Very, Very Positive" Visit

¶2. (C) On June 11, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Timor Leste, Roberto Soares, gave us a read-out of President Jose Ramos-Horta's June 5 visit to Indonesia. Soares characterized the visit as "very, very positive," noting that Ramos-Horta's decision to make Indonesia the site of his first international visit was a gesture of respect. He said that the two presidents discussed economic and political issues, and agreed to extend the Commission on Truth and Friendship's (CTF) mandate for an additional six months to give the commissioners more time to finish their work.

¶3. (C) Soares described the atmosphere as friendly, pointing out that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and Ramos-Horta had known each other for some time and noting that Ramos-Horta had visited Indonesia several times before he became president. He called SBY equally committed to establishing a good relationship, and said that SBY appreciated the support Timor Leste had given it in international fora (for example, supporting Indonesia's membership on the UN Security Council and Human Rights Commission).

14. (SBU) In a symbolic gesture, Ramos-Horta delivered part of his official speech in Indonesian (although he himself does not speak Indonesian), and he announced that the Timor Leste government was promoting Bahasa Indonesia as one of its two working languages. SBY in turn delivered one paragraph of his speech in Tetum, one of Timor Leste's official languages.

Indonesian-Timorese Relationship Continues to Improve

15. (C) On bilateral issues, the two presidents discussed border demarcation and security, particularly technical issues concerning the Oecussi enclave (according to Soares, 96 percent of all border demarcation issues have been finalized; the unresolved four percent are in the enclave of Oecussi). The Oecussi border will be finalized during an October meeting in Timor Leste, Soares said. He also indicated that a Timorese army battalion will be stationed on the border with Indonesia shortly to increase military-to-military engagement (there are only police on the Timorese side at present). Finally, the Timorese government will be staffing a military attache position, either in Jakarta or at their consulate in Kupang. Both countries, he stressed, would like to settle outstanding border issues in a friendly way.

16. (C) Over the coming years, Soares believes, both countries will continue to commit to pursuing stronger relations. He said that Indonesia will provide scholarships for Timorese who would like to study in Indonesia, and is looking into regularizing the immigration status of many current students who entered Indonesia on tourist visas. For its part, the Timor Leste government is considering ways to help illegal Indonesians in Timor Leste, many of whom are small businessmen.

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17. (C) In addition to his meetings with Yudhoyono, Ramos-Horta paid courtesy calls on the upper and lower houses of parliament (MPR and DPR). Soares said that the legislators, who were mostly pleased with the encounters, would like to enhance parliamentary-to-parliamentary relations. Sensitive bilateral issues were not raised during these visits, according to Soares.

Support for the Truth and Friendship Commission

18. (C) During Ramos-Horta's visit, the two presidents agreed to continue to use the Truth and Friendship Commission (CTF) as the mechanism for addressing the human rights abuses that occurred during Timor's independence, and agreed to extend its mandate an additional six months. Said Ramos-Horta of the CTF, "I believe that it will satisfy the people of both sides and it will set a precedent for other countries to deal with similar situations."

19. (C) Asked for his impressions of the CTF's hearings thus far, Soares was upbeat. In his view, the participation of high-level Indonesian officials in the Commission's hearings demonstrates a certain level of recognition of past human rights violations on the Indonesian side. Although he cautioned that he could not judge whether the officials' testimony was accurate or complete, he praised their willingness to testify publicly as proof of Indonesia's seriousness about the process.

110. (C) Soares indicated that Timorese witnesses have tended to be more open and transparent than the Indonesians. With regard to the Indonesian generals who have testified, he noted their tendency to blame others for what happened, particularly UNAMET. However, Soares cautioned, what the generals said in public might be different from what they told the commissioners privately. Only the commissioners can

assess the truth, Soares said, which is why the governments agreed to the extension. (Note. Separately, human rights activists have told us that they oppose any extension of the CTF's mandate. They would support it only if the CTF's terms of reference were changed to allow prosecution, a demand they have made from the beginning. Also separately, one of the commissioners said that the next CTF session, previously scheduled for Kupang, West Timor, as reported Ref A, will now be held in East Timor. In Kupang, the commission will run community workshops. End note.)

¶11. (C) Soares said that Ramos-Horta is "very committed" to continuing reconciliation via the CTF, as initiated by his predecessor. Soares also repeatedly noted the GOI's reciprocal commitment to the CTF process. Several months ago, Soares noted, Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda told him that SBY had personally contacted senior military officials to discuss the CTF.

¶12. (C) He acknowledged a high degree of skepticism among some segments of the Timorese public about whether their government was correct in eschewing other avenues to redress Indonesia's abuses, but declared that the government still believes that the CTF is the best way for now. "Let's wait to see the final result," Soares said. Based on that, as well as the reaction of the Timorese and Indonesian people and Timor Leste's "friends in the international community," the government of Timor Leste will decide on what further action, if any, to take.

U.S. Military Relations with Indonesia Benefit Timor Leste

¶13. (C) Soares expressed strong support for the continuation of U.S.-Indonesian military-to-military relations, saying that his government would oppose termination of U.S. assistance for two reasons. First, he said, cutting off aid would be damaging to the Indonesians, as it was in the past. Second, and more important, Indonesia might interpret such action as the U.S. taking Timor Leste's side against Indonesia, which would hurt Indonesian-Timorese bilateral relations. He noted that Indonesia had been suspicious of U.S. military ship visits to and humanitarian activities in Timor Leste, seeing them as proof of a "special relationship" between the U.S. and Timor Leste. The restoration of U.S.-Indonesian military relations helped lay that suspicion to rest. However, Soares fears such issues could arise again

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if aid were terminated. "The more the U.S. has relations with Indonesia," Soares stressed, "the more it benefits Timor Leste." He noted that the Timorese president had made the same point to then-Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz during a visit to the U.S. several years ago.

¶14. (C) In Soares's opinion, there is a real transformation underway in the Indonesian military. While he recognized that these reforms might not have trickled down to the lowest level yet because Indonesia is such a big country, he said that many in the highest levels recognize that mistakes were made in the past.

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